

91
*The Insufficiency of REASON, and Necessity of REVELA-
TION, to assure Men of the Pardon of Sin.*

not in 332
A
S E R M O N

PREACHED at the
TRIENNIAL VISITATION

Of the Right Reverend FATHER in GOD

RICHARD
Lord BISHOP of LINCOLN

HELD AT

MELTON-MOWBRAY in LEICESTERSHIRE

August 2. 1733

K.

By CHRISTOPHER CLARKSON D.D. Rector of Sta-
thern in Leicestershire, and late Fellow of St. Peter's College CAM-
BRIDGE.

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T O

The Right Reverend FATHER in GOD

R I C H A R D

Lord BISHOP of *LINCOLN*,

This Discourse Published at his LORDSHIP'S Request, is
with all possible Duty and Respect Dedicated, by

His LORDSHIP'S

Most Obedient

Humble Servant

CHRISTOPHER CLARKSON.



EPHES. II, 12.

That at that Time ye were without Christ, being Aliens from the Common-Wealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the world.

AS the Church, to which this Epistle was sent, consisted chiefly of Persons, who had been before their Conversion Gentiles, the Apostle in the very Entrance of it, acquaints them with the great Mystery, which had been concealed from Ages, and was in an especial manner revealed to him as the Apostle of the Gentiles; viz. that God, according to the good Pleasure of his Will had purposed before the Foundation of the World, in due Time to call them unto the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ; and observes farther, that God had now made known this his eternal Purpose by the Preaching of the Gospel: That accordingly many of them, they in particular, had actually obtained this Inheritance, and were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise as an Earnest thereof. This was so great a Blessing, that the good Apostle, in a sort of holy Rapture, ceases not to give Thanks for it, from the Time that he heard of it; and continues his Prayers for them, that God would give unto them the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation towards the farther Acknowledgement of his Son; that the Eyes of their Understanding being enlightened, they might fully know what the Hope was to which he had called them, and what the Riches of the Glory of that Inheritance, which he had given them among the Saints. And to make them still more sensible how good and gracious God had been to them, in blessing them with all these Spiritual Blessings in Christ, he sets before them, as it were in one view, their past and present Condition; convincing them how happy they are since their Conversion, by reminding them how wretched they were before: That they were dead in Trespasses and Sins; that they had their Conversation in Times past in the Lusts of the Flesh, — and were by Nature the Children of Wrath even as others: That from this sad state God was pleased (such was his Love towards them) of his mere Favour to exalt them to these Heavenly Places wherein he had seated them together in Christ Jesus. In what lofty Terms does he describe to Them their Christian State! He speaks all along as if they were already in full Possession of this Heavenly Inheritance: But least they should be tempted to think, that they had on this

C. I. v. 4, 5.

v. 9. and 11.

v. 13, 14.

v. 15, 16.

v. 17, 18.

C. 2. v. 1, 3.

v. 6.

A

Account

- v. 8, 9. Account *whereof they might glory*, he reminds them farther that this high Priviledge *was not of themselves, not of Works*, or of their own attaining, *least any Man should boast*; but solely and purely *the Gift of God*: That they were *his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works*,
 v. 10. *which God had before ordained, that they should walk in them.* And having shewn in very high, though general Terms, the Advantages of their embracing the Gospel; to heighten and set them off still the more, he again calls upon them to remember, *that they were in time past Gentiles in the Flesh*; and proceeds in my Text more minutely and particularly to describe to them how every way wretched and wicked they then were; *that being aliens from the Common-Wealth of Israel*, who were alone the People of God, they were of course ignorant of the Promises to, and Covenants made with, that Nation; and so, void of all Knowledge of Christ, or of any Expectation of Deliverance and Salvation by him: *Having no sure Hope* of any Life after this: So sunk in Ignorance and Vice, that they were *without* even the Knowledge of the true God, or that any Duty was owing to Him: They lived *without God in the World*, they neither knew Him, nor honoured Him as they ought; but lived *in and according to the Course of this World*, a sort of worldly or carnal Life, without so much as ever thinking or troubling themselves about another.

THUS much may suffice to set forth the Apostle's design in these Words, as far as is necessary to my present Purpose; *viz.* to shew the comfortless Condition the Heathen World was sunk into before the coming of Christ, when Men were left to the Guidance of their Reason alone.

AND if with this Picture of Heathenism, or of the State of Man without any *Covenant of Promise*, we compare that Account which has been lately given of it by a *Celebrated Writer*, who has spared no Art or Pains to persuade us, that Reason, during that State was, and of it self yet is, so sufficient to all the Concerns of this Life, and that which is to come, that there is no need of Revelation; and that therefore whatever has crept in under that Name, could not, as being useless, come from God, but has been the Invention of crafty and designing Men to enslave their Fellow-Creatures, and thereby the more effectually to serve their own mercenary and ambitious Purposes; if, I say, we compare this latter Account of it with the former, we can no longer be at a Loss what Judgement to form of all such idle Pretences: We must at first sight perceive that all such Reasonings are vain, direct Contradictions to History and plain Matter of Fact. For were Reason so absolutely perfect a Rule, Natural Religion so plain and easy a Thing, as this Writer represents it, how
 came

came these Heathens to fail in the very first Article of it? How came they to be ignorant of the Being of the true God; the *natural Knowledge* of whom, according to him, not only is *the Foundation of all Religion*, but of whose *Existence* we must be *as certain as of our own*. Whoever peruses this Epistle, and the Book before hinted at, must plainly perceive the Authors of them not only to have entertained very different Opinions, but to have had quite opposite Views: One, by convincing Men of the Advantage and Excellency of Christianity, to persuade them to the Belief and Practise of it; the other, by representing it as contradictory to Reason, and an Enemy to Happiness, to bring it into Discredit, and banish it from among Men.

Christianity as
old &c. 1/2.
Edit. p. 360.
Christ. &c.
P. 14.

BUT not to spend the Time in such Reflections as these; I shall endeavour to shew (it being very agreeable to the Apostle's Design in my Text, and, I hope, not unseasonable to these unhappy Days, in which Men seem intent on nothing so much as reasoning themselves out of their Religion) that Mankind, in the Free-Thinkers beloved State of Nature, that is, without any Revelation from God, must have lived and died without any Certainty of the Forgiveness of Sin, or of their being in a State of Favour and Acceptance with God; in the Condition of those in my Text, *having no well-grounded Hope* of these Things; almost in as comfortless a Condition as if there were no God; and in these Circumstances must have been almost necessarily born down by the Stream of an evil and corrupt World.

If we can make good this Point, it may recommend to us those Scriptures, and that Saviour, which have *brought to light* Forgiveness of Sins here, and *Life and Immortality* hereafter. I think there is no other, at least no better, way to convince Men of the Necessity and Advantage of Revelation, than by shewing them the Weakness and Insufficiency of their boasted Reason; that when they see how little, how very little, even in matters of the last Consequence, this darling Perfection can do, or discover for them, they may be more inclined, at least to give Revelation a fair Hearing.

To examine then what Reason can discover to Men in this State, with Regard to the Pardon of their Sins, and the Favour of God, shall be the Subject of the present Enquiry.

AND though it be not an easy matter, exactly to determine what mere Reason can, and what it cannot, discover since that Flood of Light, which has been let in upon the Mind of Man by Revelation; yet I think it will scarce be denied me, that to Man, supposed in this State, the Being

and Perfections of God are very legible in the works of the Creation; or that Man has a Natural light placed within him, which if duly attended to, will bring him to the Knowledge of a Being every way perfect; a Being who is his Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; to whom he stands indebted not only for all the Blessings of Life, but even for Life it self. Nay farther, it will inform him that this Almighty and All-good Being, from all Eternity infinitely happy in Himself, made him with a Design to make him happy; and will not fail, provided he takes care not to forfeit his Favour, finally to make him so: And that therefore he, in Return for so much Kindness, is under the strongest Ties of Gratitude and Duty to love, honour, and obey a Being thus great and good, and to whom he in particular owes his All: To thank and praise him for these many and great Blessings, which He has been pleased already to confer upon him; humbly to entreat his Aid and Protection, and the Continuance of his Favour for the Time to come; and by all proper Acts of Reverence and Worship to acknowledge his Maker's Greatness and Goodness, and his own Obligations and Dependence.

- THUS much is granted by those I am at present concerned with: And if a Christian should doubt of it, I might observe to him, that it is no more than what is plainly implied in the words of the Apostle speaking of those who had no Light but that of Nature. *Because that which may be known of God is manifest unto them, for God hath shewn it unto them:* And how he hath shewn it unto them he immediately tells us:
- Rom. I. 19. *For the invisible things of Him, viz. his Eternal Power and Godhead, ever since the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, if considered*, from the things that are made;* the Creator is visible in the Creation: *So that they are without excuse for not knowing and reverencing him as they ought.* And in the following Verses, this Knowledge of God and of their Duty to Him is supposed to lie so open to the Minds of the Heathen, that they are severely censured and condemned for not acting up to it; *because that when they knew God (at least might have known Him) they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their Imaginations, and suffered their foolish Hearts to be so darkened,*
 v. 20.
 v. 21. *that they changed the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts and creeping Things.* You see *they worshiped and served the Creature, nay even the meanest and most contemptible of the Creatures, more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.* And for this Cause God by a just and proper
 v. 25.
 v. 26. Punishment gave them up, not only unto vile Affections; but (even as *they did not like to retain Him in their Knowledge*) likewise to an undiscerning or foolish Mind.
 v. 28.

* So, I think, the Greek Word *νοούμενα* should be rendered.

AND

AND as it is abundantly plain from hence, that the very Heathen without any Revealed Law had yet Light from their Reason (would they have made a due use of it) sufficient to inform them, at least in some of the chief of those Duties, which are owing from a Creature to the Creator: So it is equally plain, that this Light, *if not wilfully darkened or neglected*, was sufficient to instruct them in most of those Duties, which were incumbent on them towards themselves and their Fellow-Creatures; for Instance, by *Temperance* and keeping their Passions under the command of Reason, to preserve in their highest perfection that Life, Health, and Understanding which God had given them; and to use them to the Good of Mankind in all such Acts of *Justice* and *Benevolence*, as naturally flowed from the Relations, which they could discover they bore to others. This, I think, is no more than what the same Apostle in general Terms says, that *the Gentiles which have not the Law, i. e. no Revealed Law, are a Law unto themselves, shewing the work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing Witness, and their Thoughts* (according as they acted against, or agreeably to this Law) *accusing or else excusing* them. Hence it undeniably appears, that at least in the plain and principal Branches of it, the Gentiles either knew, or were without Excuse for not knowing, their Duty both to God and Man.

Rom. c. II.
v. 14, 15.

THIS Law, the Seeds of it at least, being *born in* and *bred with us*, Part of our very Frame and Constitution, is, as such, generally called *The Law of Nature*; and being common to us, as we are Rational Creatures, *The Law of Reason*; what St. Paul styles *The Law of the Mind*; and, if I mistake not, *The Law of God*; by which he means no more than the Dictates of that Principle, which his Creator has placed in every Man's Breast, as a sort of Natural Guide to lead and direct him to what appears to it Fit and Just both with Regard to God and Man. Or in other words, as it is a Law to any Man, it means all that Knowledge of his Duty be it more or less, which his Mind by its own Natural Powers is capable of attaining.

Rom. c. VII.
v. 22, 23.

AND here we may reasonably expect, that Men who so highly magnify their Reason, who make it without Revelation every Thing, and Revelation above it Nothing; one may expect, I say, that they will not (and indeed in their late Writings they do not) deny, that they ought to be guided by it in all their Actions. Nay to do them Justice, they have said many excellent Things to prove, *That the highest Perfection and Happiness a Rational Being consists in governing all its Actions by the Rules of right Reason*. Since then it is on both sides agreed, that Men, considered without Revelation, have Reason for a Law; since they have a Conscience

Christianity as
old &c. Chap.
VI.

Christianity as
old &c. p. 22.

science placed within them, with an Ability by its own Light in most Cases to distinguish betwixt Good and Evil; and which will impartially *excuse* or *accuse* as they act well or ill; nothing is more plain than that this is the Law of God: It was *He* who set up this Light, and wrote this Law in the Minds of Men; and the Dictates of this Law are as truly the Voice of God (though it must be confessed it is but the *still small Voice*) as if he had spoken audibly from Heaven to us: The Voice is not so strong and loud as the Trumpet from Mount *Sinai*; but yet it is, if attended to, discernible enough. This Law was not proclaimed with so much Pomp and Terror as that in the Wilderness; but yet it is as much the Law of God not in one, but in every Age; not to one Nation, but to all Mankind; written not *in Tables of Stone*, but in the *fleshy Tables* of the Heart. And nothing is more plain, than that as such, as the Law of God, it ought to be obeyed; and if broken, the Breach of it punished. For we can never reconcile it with the Justice or Wisdom of God, to give either Natural or Revealed Laws, and to be indifferent and unconcerned about the Observance or Non-Observance of them when given. For where is the Wisdom of enacting a Law, if it be not guarded with some Sanctions? If Men are left at Liberty to keep or trample on it at Pleasure? What becomes of that impartial Justice which consists in rendering to every Man according to his Works, if it neglects either to punish the Offender, or reward the Observer of any Law? This would be for God at once for ever to render his Authority cheap, and his Commands contemptible.

2. Cor. III. 3.

THE Breach therefore of God's Laws of what kind soever must not pass unpunished. Suppose them given for the *Good of Mankind alone*, yet in order to their being made effectual to this End, a proper Distinction must be preserved betwixt the Innocent and Guilty: The Dignity of God's Government must be supported, and in every Instance the Honour of the Law-giver, and Obedience to the Law secured. Nay it seems inconsistent with God's Truth and Goodness, to set up a Principle in Men to accuse and make them uneasy as often as they offend against this Law, if he did not intend one Day to call them to an Account for such Offences. Was it not God's Design to warn them by such fear and uneasiness to sin no more, and thereby avoid future and greater Punishments, all such Fears were false and vain, without Foundation, and to no wise End or Purpose.

As certainly therefore as God is Just and True, all Transgressions against the Law of Nature must be punished. And if so, how must we in a State of Nature prevent or escape this Punishment? Where is the Man so Righteous or Happy as never once to have offended against this Law?

Law? Let the most refined and exalted Moralift, who is so fond of bringing himself and others again into this unhappy helpless State, take an impartial Survey of his Life past; let him faithfully review the Register of his Conscience, and then let him honestly declare, whether he does not meet with many Actions there, which he cannot justify even by his favourite Law of Nature. Whatever he may pretend, we know that the Scripture has proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under Sin: *Rom. III. 9.* As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one. And again, *All have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God; i. e. of obtaining by their own Righteousness that Glory which God has promised. And if so, where are his Hopes of Salvation? Can he be so weak or partial as to flatter himself, that God will reward him for offending against the Light and Law he had given him? or that He will not condemn him, for what his own Heart has already so justly condemned him? His darling Reason, as well as Revelation, will tell him, that if his Heart condemn him, God is greater than his Heart, and knoweth all Things; and that He will render Tribulation and Anguish unto every Soul of Man that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. Even his Reason will assent to what the Scripture teaches him; That as many as have sinned without Law i. e. without any Revealed Law, shall also perish without Law i. e. without being tried or judged by any such Law. And hence it is evident, that Mankind was always under a Law, even before either the Law of Moses, or of Christ, was given; otherwise how could God judge the Heathen World? God's Condemnation of wicked Heathens can never be made appear Clear and Just, unless we suppose, that they sinned against Knowledge, and were guilty of many Crimes, which their Reason expressly forbade: For where no Law is, there is no Transgression; and where there is no Transgression, there can be no Place for Punishment. And as it is evident from hence, that the Heathens were under the Law of Nature, so, agreeably to what is said above, we find that excellent Reasoner St. Paul taxing the whole Heathen World with sinning against that Law, and thence drawing an irresistible Argument to shew them the Necessity of a Saviour to atone for them. So that if Salvation could have been had in such a State by Men's strictly living up to the Law of Nature, yet there never was any Man who did this, and therefore no one, who purely by Virtue of his own Merit ever did obtain it.* *Rom. II. 9.* *Rom. IV. 15.* *Rom. III. 9.* *v. 23.* *v. 12.*

AND here considering the high and haughty Pretences of the present Admirer of Reason to superior Talents and Abilities; that he alone can discern true and uncorrupt Religion amidst that Cloud of Error and Superstition, which surrounds it, and has an infallible Test and Touchstone of his own whereby to try it; methinks one may expostulate with him, as St Paul formerly with the vain-glorious Jew, making his Boast of the Law

Rom. II. 17. *Law of Moses: Behold thou reatest in Natural Religion, and makest thy Boast of God; and knowest his Will, and approvest the Things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Law of Reason; and art confident that thou thyself art a Guide of the Blind, a Light of them which are in Darkness, an Instructor of the Foolish, a Teacher of Babes, which hast the Form of Knowledge and of the Truth in the Law of Reason. Thou therefore that makest thy Boast of the Law of Reason, through breaking this Law dishonourest thou God?*

v. 23.

THE Case then of Mankind under this State is in short this. — All Men have a Natural Law written in their Hearts by God, and all Men do in numberless Instances offend against this Law, and thereby *become guilty before God*; God's Justice and Honour therefore are concerned in the Vindication of this Law from Contempt and Insult: Hence it is clear, that without some Satisfaction made for these Offences, and some Declaration on God's Part that he would please to accept of it, we could by no means be certain that they would be forgiven: And if not, into what a desperate Condition is Mankind brought by this All-sufficient Law of Reason?

BUT here it will be objected, That though Men in such a State may be guilty of many Sins against the Law of Nature; yet they may repent of these, as well as others do of Sins committed against the Revealed Laws of God; and upon such Repentance may have as good a Title to God's Mercy, and rest as fully assured of his Favour, as they who live under a Positive Law. *That Mankind, at all Times, are upon a Level in this Respect; that since doing Evil is the only Foundation of God's Displeasure, ceasing to do Evil, and doing the contrary, must at all Times equally take away that Displeasure.*

Christianity as old &c. p. 417, 418.

TO which I answer, That the Case of Mankind, before and since the coming of Christ, is in this Respect very different. God has indeed in the Gospel promised Pardon of Sins to Repentance or Amendment of Life; but then this is to be considered, as part of that gracious Covenant, which He has vouchsafed to make with us in Christ Jesus. This is a Privilege purchased for us by the Blood of that beloved Son, for whose Sake He condescends to be, even after we have offended Him, *well pleased with us; We have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins.* Sin indeed in this Case hath not a lasting Dominion over us; but the Reason is, because *we are not under the Law, but under Grace.* This is supposing Man in a State of Grace or Favour, under a Covenant of Mercy, and acceptable through the Merits of a Redeemer; this is supposing his Peace made, and *that God has through Christ so reconciled him*

to assure Men of the PARDON of SIN.

to Himself, as *not* to impute his *Trespases* unto him. But considering him, as in my Text, stript of all these Advantages, *without Christ, a Stranger* to all *Covenants of Promise*, his Condition is widely different.

LET us view it as distinctly as we are able. In this State, a Man might be sure indeed that he had sinned; but could by no means be secure of Pardon. God's Justice must for ever as strongly incline him to Fear, as his Mercy can to Hope: Nay, I think, more so here; because Sin of course renders him an Object of Justice. And as there never was any Man so perfect, as to say, even under the Law of Nature, that he had at all Times, and on every Occasion, done his Duty; that he had never been wanting in any Branch of it; never once offended against the Law of his Mind through Infirmary, Inadvertency, or even wilfully and presumptuously, so as to have *Works whereof to glory before God*, or to claim his *Reward not of Grace but of Debt*: As there never was any Man who could say, that he had not been a *Transgressor of the Law*, so there never was any Man who could prove it unjust in God to punish him; and if in this Case he cannot prove it unjust in God to punish, he can never prove that he is obliged to pardon: And the more Reason he has to fear that he shall not, the more must he necessarily doubt least he should not, be forgiven: Because from the very Principle of Self-preservation, and an innate Desire of Happiness, Men in all doubtful Cases, especially if they be matters of Moment, are naturally apt to dread the worst. The Sinner in this Case lies plainly at the Mercy of his Judge. He is in the Condition of one who has broke the Laws of his Prince or Country: He knows he has incurred the Penalty of the Law, that he deserves Death for the Transgression of it, and his Hopes of Pardon can be at best but very uncertain. St. Paul in the Conclusion of the first Chapter to the *Romans* plainly supposes, that the *Light of Reason* was able to discover to the Heathen, that they among Them who broke the *Law of Reason*, who committed such Things as he had been there describing, *were worthy of Death*: And that he meant this of the Heathen in general, is evident from III. 9. where he says, *We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are ALL under Sin*.

v. 32.

BUT besides this, there is another Thing supposed in the foregoing Objection, and frequently in the Writings of the Author there quoted, which can by no means be granted; viz. that Men in general, without the Gospel-Grace and Assistance, were able to Repent, and Amend their Lives: *To live as those, whom Christ came to reform, were taught to live*. This supposition is contrary to Truth and Fact, contrary to all Representations of this Matter both in the Scriptures, and Heathen Writers; whence it appears, that by the Fall of the first Man, and a long Course

Christianity as
old &c. p. 49.

Ephes. IV.
18.

v. 19.

Rom. VII. 18.

v. 22.

v. 23.

of Sin in general, and Idolatry in particular afterwards, the Gentiles were become *exceeding* ignorant and *sinful*; *having the Understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that was in them, by Reason of the Hardness* of their Heart*: They are said to have been *past Feeling*, to have given themselves over unto *Lasciviousness, to work all Uncleannefs with Greediness*. And agreeably hereto, they are every where represented by their own Writers, as too blind to perceive their Duty, and too weak and corrupt to perform it. But not to heap together Passages of this Nature. — Let us suppose that a Man, as yet a *Stranger* to any *Covenant of Promise*, should from contemplating God's Natural Goodness, be encouraged to hope for Pardon, upon being sorry for his Sins, and resolving for the future on a new Course of Obedience: Yet alas! what can this avail him? He will upon Trial find himself *without Strength* to put his new Resolution in Practice: *To will that which is good may be present with him, but how to perform it*; that in this State he either will not, or cannot, find. He may, like St. Paul's Natural Man, *inwardly delight in the Law of God*; but he will perceive *another Law in his Members, warring against the Law of his Mind, and bringing him into Captivity to the Law of Sin*. His Reason will tell him he has a Law to keep, and every Day's fatal Experience will convince him, that he is not able to keep it. The more excellent and reasonable, the more *holy, just, and good the Law is*, the more uneasy and unhappy must he of necessity be under the Sense of the continual Breach of it. All that Reason can do for him will be to discover to him a Rule of Right, which he is not able to keep; to furnish him with fair Ideas of Virtue, which he cannot act up to; to caution him against Vice, which yet he knows not how to shun; to persuade him, that he is under an Obligation, of which he is unable to acquit himself; in one word, to convince him of his Misery, without shewing him how to prevent it. For after all he can do in this State, he will find his best Resolutions and strongest Endeavours so very frail, his new Obedience so imperfect, and himself so frequently relapsing into his former Sins; he will find this State of Sinning and Repenting, and then Sinning again almost unavoidably, so little different from a continued Course of Sin, that Doubts and Distrusts must be daily springing up concerning its Acceptance with God. What can he Hope from such a feeble and broken Course of Obedience as this? Can he ever flatter himself that Virtue thus imperfect can deserve an immortal Reward? A Man in this State, finding himself under almost a Necessity of constantly sinning, must needs be damp and strangely discouraged

* *Hardness* of their Heart. That *σκληρον* should be here rendered *Hardness*, is I think plain; because as their *Ignorance* is assigned as the Reason of their *Alienation from God*; so the *Hardness of their Heart* is assigned as the Cause or Reason of their *Ignorance*. And it is on account of this *Hardness* or *Callousness of their Heart*, that they are said in the next Verse to be *past Feeling*.

in his Hopes both of Pardon for past Sins, and of being able to become better for the future: At least he must be very far from *Certainty* and Comfort in these Points.

THIS Account of Man's weakness before Christ is confirmed by Scripture, the Apostle declaring, that *when we were yet without Strength, in due Time Christ died for the Ungodly: From this Captivity to the Law of Sin we were delivered by the Grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rom. V. 6. Rom. VII. 23, 25. This was so plainly the Case of Man without Christ, that the whole Christian Dispensation is built upon it; and every where supposes, *That it is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good Pleasure.* 2. Cor. III. 4. 5. From whom therefore we are commanded continually to pray for Grace and Assistance; and are assured, that then his Grace will be sufficient for us, his *Strength made perfect in our Weakness*; and that we shall be able to *do all Things through Christ which strengtheneth us.* 2 Cor. XII. 9. Phil. IV. 13. It is plain from hence, that at the Time when Men were without Christ, void of Gospel-Grace, they could not so easily, as the Objection supposes, *cease to do Evil, and do the contrary*: But were the *Servants and Slaves of Sin*, and as such proper Objects of his Justice; this Author himself confessing, *That as long as Men continue in their Sins, they must continue the proper Objects of God's Resentment.* Rom. VI. 20. Christianity as old &c. P. 418.

BUT supposing, though not granting, that Men in this State *could cease to do Evil, and do the contrary*; that they could, after a Course of Sin, for some Time pay a *perfect Obedience*; yet we should do well to consider, that *this* was due, if they had always continued innocent; and therefore can never compensate for past Offences: It is so far from being evident, that it is not true, *That this must take away that Displeasure of which these Offences are the only Foundation.* For alas! these Offences are not hereby undone; the ill Consequences of them yet remain. Will abstaining from Murder for the Time to come, restore a Life taken away in Time past? If I have robbed or injured my Neighbour, will my not doing it again be a sufficient Satisfaction, or take away that *Displeasure*, of which this Robbery or Injury was the only Cause? Such Questions as these carry with them their own Absurdity and Answer. This would be to suppose our best Actions to have so much more Excellency and Perfection than they themselves want, as may suffice to satisfy or atone for our worst; a wild Supposition indeed! If Repentance be in all Cases a sufficient Atonement for Sin; if it be so easy to cease to do Evil, and ceasing to do Evil, since it is the only Cause of God's Displeasure, must necessarily take it away; why upon *Adam's* Repentance (for repent no doubt he did) was he not immediately restored to God's Favour? Why was not God's Displeasure immediately removed, and the Sentence of Death

on him and his Posterity, either not passed, or not immediately reversed? If the Case be thus, why do not the fallen Angels repent, and thereby recover their lost Seats of Bliss? This Author's Principle, if admitted, would put an end to all Laws, destroy all Government both Divine and Human.

BUT not to insist longer in so plain a Case. It is evident from what has been said, that Repentance in this State is not like the *Reformation* of a Christian, not *Newness of Life*; it is not becoming a *New Man* or a *New Creature*; it is little more than a fruitless Shame and Sorrow, which at the same Time that it shews the Grief, shews likewise the Guilt of the Offender; but can neither of it self undo the Offence, or be any Reparation or Satisfaction for it. And therefore in this State, Men plainly having a Law to keep, and yet without Strength to keep it; and as often as they broke it, unable to repair the Breach: In these doubtful and forlorn Circumstances, without being in Covenant with God, without any Promise of Pardon or Reconciliation, I conclude, that human Reason could never discover what the Consequence would be; whether God would be severely just and punish: Or how far, or whether at all, or, if at all, on what Terms, he would pardon Sin. The sinner could at best but enjoy some doubtful Hopes of uncertain Mercy, and even these must expire every time he sinned; and in this State he would sin almost every moment. So that a Sinner under no Covenant, on no Conditions with his Maker, and comforted with no Promise, is but like a Man travelling in the Dark, where he can see no Track before him, but all is Doubt and Uncertainty. He is sensible that he has lost his way, but by which Path to return and recover it again, he knows not: Or if he could guess at that, he finds his Strength fail him; and under all these Disadvantages he will be naturally apt to fear the worst. So that he must in this Case languish under a sense of his Sin without any Assurance of Pardon; he must live without Hope, and die without Comfort. If this be a desirable State, let the Infidel enjoy it! he seems rather an Object of our Pity and Prayers than of our Envy. For what Man in his Senses can prefer such Doubt and Darkness as this, to the comfortable and glorious Light of the Gospel? If this be the Result of his boasted Reasoning, this a Mark of his Parts and Wisdom, let me, with St. Paul, rather *glory in the Cross of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, though I should by all the World be accounted a Fool for such glorying!

Gal. VI. 14.

THE whole Argument is in a few words this: All Men have the Light of Nature given them as a Law or Rule of Action; all Men have transgressed this Law, are by Nature Sinners, and of Consequence liable to Death and Condemnation: And our Sorrow for past Sins being by no means

means able to undo the Ill we have done, or (exclusive of a Covenant of Mercy, and the Merits of a Saviour) to assure us of God's Favour or the Pardon of Sin, it follows, that in this State there is no sure and certain Hope for Sinners, and yet that in this State all Men are Sinners.

AND if we apply this Reasoning to those in our Days who renounce their Saviour, the Argument will conclude more strongly against them: They are then, being cut off by their Unbelief from all Interest in Christ, in the State I have been describing; and still sin against the Law of Nature, against it too enlightened by Revelation, made much clearer than the Heathens enjoyed it; and are therefore, in Proportion to the Encrease and Superiority of the Light against which they offend, more guilty, more inexcusable than the Heathens. *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than for these.* The Rule is, They who never heard of the Gospel, though wicked, will be more excusable than those who wilfully reject, or sin under so powerful means of Salvation. Of such our blessed Saviour says, *If he had not come and spoken unto them, they had not (comparatively speaking) had Sin; but now they have no Cloak for their Sin.* Mat. XI. 22. John XV. 22.

AND having now done with the Argument, I shall just point out the Use of it, and apply it to the present Occasion.

THE Use then of the foregoing Doctrine is in short this; to convince us of the Benefit and Blessing of a Divine Revelation in general, and in particular of the Comfort of a Promise of Pardon of Sin, upon sincere Repentance, through the Merits of Christ Jesus. I think it has been proved, that without an express Promise from God, Mankind, in the State supposed, could not be certain that he would forgive Sin. How void of Comfort then must they have been in a state, in which they could hardly avoid sinning, and yet could have no Assurance of Pardon! Should we therefore after all cast off our Religion, renounce our Saviour; and could we destroy all the Light, which has been let in upon us by Revelation; yet alas! what other Thing would this be doing, than rendering the Condition of Mankind, already miserable enough in its self, a thousand Times more melancholly and miserable than it was before?

How easy to observe from hence the Happiness of our present State, the Blessedness of a Change from Darkness to Light, from Doubt and Despair to Certainty and Comfort in Things of the nearest and most lasting Concern to us! Is it possible that there can be Men so proud and perverse as to shut their eyes, wilfully to shut them, against Light and Conviction in such comfortable and important Truths as these? or Rational Crea-

Creatures sunk so low, as willingly to give up even the Hopes, much more the Certainty, of Immortality? the Belief of which (as a Noble Heathen observed) were it an Error, is yet such a pleasing one, that a Man would be loath to part with it.

AND really to believe there is a God, and yet to live without any Assurance of being in his Favour, in just Doubts and Fears of being under his Displeasure; I know not whether this be not more melancholly, than to fancy there is no God: For the Atheist (if an Atheist there be) as he has nothing to hope on this Account, so he has nothing to fear; but the Fears of the other must be superior to his Hopes, as he must be sure that he has sinned, but not sure that he is pardoned. So that this Man has all the Dread which the Belief of a God can give him, without any of the Hope or Comfort which that Man enjoys, who has a promise, on very reasonable Terms, of the Pardon of his Sins here, and of *Life and Immortality* hereafter.

SINCE then, so far as Reason can judge in the case (and Revelation is almost in every Page clear and express in it) there is no Assurance of the Pardon of Sin, no well-grounded Hopes of a happy Immortality without a Saviour; and since there is no other Saviour but Him in whom we believe, *let us be careful to hold fast the Profession of our Faith in him.* And since there are Men, who are so far from being thankful for the Salvation purchased by *Him* for them, as to boast, that by the Guidance of their Reason alone, they have found out a shorter and surer way to Heaven, than *He* or his Apostles ever taught; since such fatal Opinions as these are with great Industry spread abroad both in Writing and Conversation; since there are Men thus active in the Cause of Infidelity, Men who *compass Sea and Land to make a Profelyte*, and thereby *make him twofold more the Child of Hell than before*; at such a Time it becomes every sincere Christian to stand up in Defence of his Religion. To be silent, when it is thus warmly attacked, would be meanly to betray it. It becomes them more especially, whose peculiar Office it is to watch over the Souls of others, to guard not only themselves, but the Flocks committed to their Care, against such dangerous Opinions as these. For let us remember, that we are commanded to be Examples to others not only in *Conversation* but in *Faith*; that we are to *take heed not only to ourselves, but unto our Doctrine*; and that we must do so, if we expect either *to save ourselves, or those who hear us.*

Hebr. X. 23.

Mat. XXIII.

15.

1 Tim. IV.

12.

v 16.

AND surely this was never more necessary than at present. The Clergy have long had the Vices of the World to encounter, but the Enemy seems of late Years to have gained Ground. What was before *Impiety*

is

is hardened into *Infidelity*. Men, I fear, were always bad in *Practice*; they are now become so in *Principle*. They were before but too apt to neglect the great Truths of Religion; they now openly deny and deride them. They were content formerly with attacking *some particular Parts and Articles* of it; their Aim now is against the *Whole*. They strike at the very Life and Soul of the Scriptures, not indeed by shewing that we have not sufficient Evidence for the Truth of them, (this they know they cannot do) but by serving them as a bad Man may at any Time do the best Thing in the World, first misrepresenting, and then ridiculing them; and by warmly applying, where they are sure of a partial Hearing, to the weaker and worse part, the sinful Passions of Mankind. The Scriptures they know are against these, and therefore conclude but too justly that these will be against the Scriptures. They set up Reason too as an All-sufficient Guide against Revelation; it is to be feared, not with a Design to follow the former, but the more easily to shake off the latter. For if they could once get rid of this last, they could manage the first at Discretion: Every Man's Reason would then be what he himself pleased; the Dictates of corrupt Nature would pass for it; and Reason would then be pretended to persuade and patronize the most unreasonable Things. Passion would be placed at the Helm, and Inclination set up for the Guide of Life. On this supposition every Man must be the sole Judge of his own Actions, choose a Religion for himself, and do without Controul what seemed good in his own Eyes.

Christianity as
old &c. p.
345.

It is our peculiar Office, *my Reverend Brethren*, to lay open the Falshood of these Pretences; to put on the whole Armour of God, and as Champions for the Truth, maintain the Cause of Religion and Revelation: As sworn Servants and Soldiers of Christ, *under his Banner, who is the Captain of our Salvation, manfully to fight the good Fight of Faith* against these and every other Attempt: To stand in the Gap against Impiety and Infidelity, in whatever Shape or under what Colours soever they may appear. We have for our Encouragement the best Cause in the World to defend, a Cause which (to use the words of an able Champion of our Church upon another Occasion is *able to make even a weak Man strong**. What a Shame therefore would it be to us, should we through Ignorance of any Kind, especially of the Scriptures, (that inestimable Treasure committed to our Trust) be unable to defend this Cause! How would our Enemies triumph! How must Truth and Religion suffer! — Certain it is that the success of these in the World will in a great Measure depend upon our Care. Our Enemies have of late kept no Measures of Truth or Decency with us: They represent us every where in their Books as the worst of Men, as engrossing Knowledge,

Ephes. VI. 11.

1 Tim. VI.
12.

Christianity as
old &c. p 47,
145, 165,
169, 198,
232, 316,
336, 406.

* *Chillingworth*. See his Dedication.

grasp-

Ecclef. XI. 9.

grasping at Power, and making no other use of them but to serve our own Ends, to deceive, and divide, and corrupt the weaker part of Mankind, and over-awe the wiser. Their Charge in Conversation is of a different Nature, and somewhat inconsistent with the former: Our Ignorance and Vice are the chief Topicks on which they love to dwell, when surrounded by their Sets of Admirers. But whatever their Pretences are, it is easy to perceive, through their most artful Disguises, the true Reason of all this Rudeness. However ignorant or vitious we may be, their Quarrel with us in Reality is, that we are neither so ignorant nor so vitious as they could wish; that we are knowing enough to expose their Arts, and detect their Errors; that we have the Interests of Virtue, and Good of Mankind, enough at Heart, to be irreconcilable Enemies to their Designs, and to prevent, to the utmost of our Power, their doing that Mischief which they so eagerly desire. This is an Injury they can never forgive us. What makes them so uneasy under the great Imposition of a Ministry is, that it is their Business to remind them of the Obligations they are under; that they will not suffer them to *walk in the ways of their Heart, and in the Sight of their Eyes* without Restraint; that by their Means the Interest and Reputation of Religion are supported; and that they are thereby too much cramped and confined in their Behaviour, tied up too close to Decency and Duty. The Religion of others too is often a Check to the Gratification of their Lusts, and a silent Reproach to their Lives: To such their Vices render them odious, and are a Bar to their Admittance. They are sensible, that to the Clergy are in a great measure owing these Difficulties and Hardships, these Rubs in the way to their Designs. They know very well that a Sense of Religion, and the Practise even of Moral Virtue, can never be long kept up in the World, without an Order of Men appointed to *attend continually on this very Thing*; to remind Men of their Duty, to explain and enforce it. They know, that while these are continued, they will never be able to bring about their Ends. Hence all this Outcry and Outrage against us.

BUT let us not be discouraged, their Hate on this Account is our Glory. The better we are, the more sharply we must expect to feel their Resentment. And, least any Fear of Man should ever betray us to be so mean, as to endeavour to appease this Ill-will, by deserting the Cause of Religion and Virtue; let us engrave it on our Hearts, how justly contemptible, by so doing, we must become even to them and our selves here, and how heavy our Judgment must be hereafter! However it may become, nay it highly concerns us, to consider, that since Christianity is so reasonable and excellent an Institution, so calculated in every Branch of it to make Men happy, how it comes to pass that Infidelity increases so much in this Nation: And to be very careful least we should give Occasion

casion to those who seek Occasion, to charge us in any Respect justly as the Cause of it. This would be an indelible Stain upon us! an everlasting Shame and Reproach to our Order! Let us therefore *take heed to the Ministry which we have received and fulfil it*: Let us *be blameless and harmless*, as becomes the Sons and Servants of God, *without Rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation**, among whom we are to *shine as Lights in the World, holding forth the Word of Life*. Let us so teach and so live, *that he who is of the contrary Part may be ashamed, having no Evil Thing to say of us*. Colof. IV. 17. Phil. II. 15. Titus II. 8.

GIVE me leave to observe farther, that we can never hope to acquit ourselves with success in the noble, the necessary Work of defending Religion, but by a careful and conscientious Study of the Holy Scriptures, and of whatever may conduce to the thorough Understanding of them. And we may inforce the Necessity of this upon our Selves by the same melancholy Argument, by which St. Paul seems to have inforced it on Titus: *That we may be able by sound Doctrine both to exhort and to convince the Gainsayers: For there are many unruly and vain Talkers and Deceivers, whose Mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole Houses, teaching Things which they ought not*. Titus I. 9, 10, 11.

WE must too at this Time examine the Strength and Weakness of Reason: Shew what it can and what it cannot do: Fix the proper Boundaries betwixt It and Faith: Convince Men that they are, if kept within these Bounds, mutual Helps to each other: That Revelation comes in to our Aid where Reason fails us: That this latter never was, that we know of, so clear and strong, but that we might well be thankful for whatever Assistance has been afforded by the former: That Reason, if rightly used, is not only the Judge, but great Support of every true Revelation: That its Principles if sincerely persued, without being byassed by any Prejudice from a Love to Vice or Vanity, must upon a due Examination of it, necessarily convince a Man of the Truth of Christianity. Far be it from us to derogate from the Evidence or Excellency of this Natural Light, which is one, and one of the most valuable Gifts of God to Men; but yet surely we may without Offence take Notice how it has been abused. We must insist that it becomes necessary to shew the Folly and Arrogance, the Vanity and Presumption of Human Reason, when it opposes it self to Divine; when it forgets that it is but a faint Ray of an Infinite Perfection; when it so strangely mistakes it self as to fancy that it is All-knowing and All-sufficient; when it dares to exalt it self, and

* Generation] Our Translation has it Nation; but as this is Moses's Word Deut. XXXII. 5. and is there rightly translated Generation, I think it ought to be rendered so here: That being the Signification of the Greek Word *γενεα*.

to question God's Wisdom in every Thing which it is not able to account for, and even his Right to act, unless it be in every minute Circumstance satisfied, not only with the Fitness, but Manner of his Proceedings. We must shew, that this Principle pursued, would destroy all Natural as well as Revealed Religion: For there are Mysteries incomprehensible by Reason in Creation and Providence as well as in Redemption; numberless Secrets to us in the Natural and Moral World, Difficulties in our Conceptions of the Nature and Attributes of God himself, which Reason can never conquer; and therefore that this Principle leads directly to Atheism. This will engage us in a long and laborious Enquiry; in the severe Study not only of the Sacred Writers, and their Interpreters antient and modern, but of the best Authors in Morality and Philosophy, especially in the Heathen World: Whence it will appear how imperfect their Scheme of Duty: How little they were able to fix its Obligation, or enforce its Practice: How dark and dubious their Notions of God and of his Providence: At what a Loss they were about the Manner or Kind of that Worship which was to be paid to Him, and the particular Methods of appeasing Him: How after all their fine Sayings, they were most, if not all of them, carried away by the reigning Superstition and Idolatry of the Country in which they lived: How all the Knowledge they could attain, even in relation to the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State of Rewards and Punishments, was little more than Surmise, some warm Wishes, Conjecture rather than Conviction. Their *great Men* rather seemed to *promise* such Things, than were able fully and clearly to *prove* them. Hence it will appear beyond Dispute, that the wisest and best of the Heathens were deeply sensible of the Weakness of their Reason, and of the Want and Necessity of a Divine Revelation. *Socrates, Plato and Cicero* were confessedly as great Men, and thought as *freely* as our modern Deists; and if these last think their Reason clearer and stronger than the former was, I would gladly know to what this can be owing, but to the Light borrowed from that Revelation, which they so ungratefully cry down and vilify. But to conclude.

THUS qualified for the Defence of our most Excellent Religion, thus virtuously resolute to defend it, and adorning it in all Things by a suitable Profession, it is to be hoped, by the Blessing of God upon our Sincere Endeavours, that the growing Infidelity must give way; and that the Truth and Reasonableness, the Excellency and Beauty of Christianity will shine forth and triumph over all Opposition. And if we might be any way instrumental in bringing about this blessed End, how just must be our Praise! how great our Satisfaction here, and how *exceeding* our Reward hereafter! Then all Objections to our Religion, would be

so far from injuring it, that by being made to appear void of Truth and Force, they would naturally turn to its Advantage, necessarily tend to strengthen and confirm it. The Church of Christ would then appear to be so firmly founded upon a *Rock, that the Gates of Hell*, the united Powers of Sin and Satan, could not prevail against it. The Waves of Infidelity would be but like Waves dashed against this Rock, which would shew at once *its Firmness*, and their own Weakness; they might rage and roar, but how easily would they be broken and dispersed! Or whatever the Event might be, we should however have the Comfort of having done our Duty, and by having so done, of saving our own Souls, and receiving from our Master that best of Applauses, *Well done thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* Math. XVI. 18. Math. XXV. 21.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy-Ghost, three Persons and one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Power, and Glory now and for evermore. Amen.

FINIS

ERRATA.

Page 3. in the Margin *Christianity &c.* for *p. 360.* read *36.* P. 5. l. 39. for *Happiness a Rational Being*, read *Happiness of a Rational Being.* P. 11. in the Margin read *Phil. II. 13.* for *2 Cor. III. 4, 5.*

NOTES OF THE LANCET

4-12-1918. The following is a summary of the results of the investigation into the cause of the outbreak of influenza in the United Kingdom. The results show that the disease was caused by a virus which was introduced into the country from the United States of America. The virus was carried by a ship which arrived in England in the month of January. The disease spread rapidly and was carried by the air. The results of the investigation show that the disease was caused by a virus which was introduced into the country from the United States of America. The virus was carried by a ship which arrived in England in the month of January. The disease spread rapidly and was carried by the air.

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